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ORATION

OF

JOHN J. LERMEN



CALIFORNIA'S ADMISSION DAY
SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1915

PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL
EXPOSITION :: SAN FRANCISCO

1850

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ORATION

OF

JOHN J. LERMEN

Past President Society of California Pioneers

CALIFORNIA'S ADMISSION DAY

September 9th, 1915

COURT OF THE UNIVERSE

Panama-Pacific International Exposition
San Francisco, California

OBSERVED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

The Society of California Pioneers
The Woman's Auxiliary of the Society of California Pioneers
The Daughters of California Pioneers
The Association of Pioneer Women of California
The Native Daughters of the Golden West
The Native Sons of the Golden West

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California's Admission Day, September 9th, 1915
Address of John J. Lermen, Orator of the Day
Court of Universe, Panama-Pacific International Exposition

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Today a descendant of a Pioneer appears before you to address you on behalf of the Pioneers of '49. That fact, of itself, signifies that that great army of men who came to California in 1849 is now almost all but a memory. It is with a feeling of much diffidence that I, of the second generation, undertake even approximately to do justice to the memory of the men and women who have bequeathed to us a heritage of gigantic achievement, unmarred by any act, ignoble or unpatriotic.

It is an easy thing to enthuse over the deeds of our pioneers, as in loving memory and proud contemplation we think of the situation that confronted them in the days of '49, the manner in which they met it, the order that they drew out of chaos, and the society that they builded, rough hewn though for a time it might have been. It was a man's work that the Pioneers of '49 found laid out for them when they came here, and that work was performed by manly men in a manly way.

It was on the 24th day of January, 1848, that James W. Marshall, at Sutter's Mill, at Coloma, discovered that small nugget of gold that brought the first general recognition from the world that here, in California, was to be found a true El Dorado. Within a few years Marshall's nugget, worth in itself the paltry sum of fifty cents, when measured by the gold unearched from the hiding places revealed by its discovery, has increased in value to over a thousand millions of dollars. The world's supply of gold was suddenly largely increased, and, with its aid, the world at large became bigger and better for it. New industries sprang into being and old ones were revived,

not in our country alone, but everywhere throughout the civilized world. But far above the value of the glittering gold was the new empire that the Pioneer developed for his country, large enough and fertile enough to support, not only in comfort but in luxury, a population far greater than what then was in the entire Nation.

And the march of the Pioneers began. While many came from South America, the Islands of the Pacific, and from the Orient, by far the greater portion of the number who started for California in 1848 and 1849 were from the eastern states of our own country. True Americans all of them, schooled in liberty, taught the rights and the principles of freedom, educated in the belief that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

When our forefathers left their homes in the eastern states to come to this then distant land, they brought with them a physical endowment far above the average. The flower of the youth of our country were they. Naturally, and in keeping with the old adage, in such sound bodies were sound minds. With a full realization of the dangers of the march across the continent and of the voyage around the Horn, they brought with them a courage that could not be weakened, a determination that was not to be denied. Added to these endowments of a perfect physique and a clean and wholesome mind, they brought with them a knowledge of the principles of American freedom, of American government, and of American citizenship.

And so it was that our Pioneers fitted into the new country and with one another so quickly, so easily, and as if to the manner born, that notwithstanding the remarkable fact that from the adoption of the Constitution in November, 1849, until the formal acceptance of California as a State on September 9, 1850, California was without a government to enforce its laws, nevertheless this State enjoyed as much ease, as much happiness, and as much security for honest men and women as we

have ever enjoyed since our formal recognition as a State. Seldom, perhaps, has a more peculiar political situation developed than that which existed here in California during the period succeeding the adoption of the Constitution and before the admission of California as a State. Without any organic law to govern them, without knowing just exactly by what authority justice was administered, nevertheless order was maintained and the Pioneers went about their affairs just as though they were still citizens of the eastern states. Our Pioneers builded here a new community made up of men and women with real red blood, men and women who had little or no patience with crime and disorder, but nevertheless men and women whose predominating and characteristic trait in their relations with one another is best expressed in the old saying, "Live and let live." They, our fathers and mothers, lived in a land of toleration and they practiced toleration, perhaps, because they were not yet so far removed in point of time from their own ancestors who, in 1776, went to war for the sake of that same principle, "Live and let live."

And so they started here, some across the continent and others over the stormy seas and the rebellious waters of Cape Horn. An army of one hundred thousand they were, young and strong American citizens, each one of them nurtured in the cradle of American liberty. Down the sides of the Sierras they swarmed, gathering new strength with the satisfaction that at last they had reached the land of promise. In through the Golden Gate they sailed in a fleet of vessels so numerous that their masts transformed the placid waters of the bay into a forest. Up from the bay, and down from the mountain, the vanguard of the two Pioneer armies met where the plain joins the mountain, and the joyful acclaim of the one was hurled back, echo-like, by the exultant shouts of the other until they were all blended together in the one magic word, "Eureka."

There have been pioneers and pioneering expeditions as long as the world has existed. Sad to relate, but

nevertheless true, many of these pioneer expeditions were inspired only by the spirit of conquest. With such pioneers, victory meant despoliation and rapine to the unfortunate people in the unhappy land that might be touched by the blight of their invasion. "Like swarms of locusts they came, and devoured and disappeared, leaving no trace of their coming or their going but their own ravages." Or perhaps like moths, they were consumed by the fire of the civilization, whose light they might have darkened but whose fires they could not quench or destroy.

But the Pioneer of 1849 was animated by a wholly different motive. He came here to occupy this land, to civilize it, to improve it, and to make this an abiding place for himself and his descendants for all time. He came here in answer to the call of El Dorado. He came here to unlock the vaults, the doors of which were to swing open for him who held the combination. The combination was tireless energy, indomitable perseverance, and unshakable courage, and the Pioneer possessed all these.

It is hardly fair to the Pioneers to say that "They builded better than they knew." The archives of the Society of California Pioneers hold no more priceless evidence of the brain and the wisdom of the Pioneers, and especially of their leaders, than the orations of the men who from 1853 commemorated this day in addresses delivered at the exercises commemorative of the time and the occasion. Pervaded by a lofty spirit, breathing a promise of a future to San Francisco and to California that perhaps to some at that time might have sounded like a tale from the "Arabian Nights" and the product of an exaggerated fancy, nevertheless today those same prophecies, when measured by the conditions that prevail today, when measured by the Society that has been builded up, by the city that has been rebuilt, the city that *will* rise again even though the forces of an otherwise kind nature might for a time prevail against her, when

measured by the encouragement given to art, to music, to science, and to culture generally, when in fact measured coldly and calmly by the yardstick, or weighed in the tipping balance of a grocer's scales, those prophecies will be found each and all of them to have been fulfilled. The descendants of the Pioneers have not been found wanting. The Pioneer did not over-reach himself in his preparation for the days and the people and the conditions that were to follow from his beginnings. The pioneer of '49 knew just what he was building and it was with a firm, devout, aye, a religious belief in the absolute, unalterable, and unchangeable destiny of the land that he opened up and developed, that he proceeded with his work and was not swerved therefrom by fire or earthquake, by plague, epidemic, or other disasters, or by difficulties that were unique and peculiar because of conditions then prevailing in a land far removed from the world's centers of civilization.

The word "Pioneer" is of tender significance to us. Not only does it recall vividly the struggles, the hardships, the obstacles, and the successful overcoming of them that have endeared our Pioneers to us, but we are also reminded that the Forty-niner, within less than one year after his coming, founded here a political organization so completely endowed with all of the qualifications necessary for admission to Statehood that Congress could not well deny California's claims. True, the final act of admission was delayed until September 9, 1850, a period of about ten months from the time that California first knocked at the door of the Nation for admission into the Sisterhood of States, but the fact remains that she was admitted just as she had presented herself, after only about ten months of preliminary training and development.

The Pioneers of California are in a great measure the pioneers of the Nation, for directly and indirectly they opened up the entire Pacific Coast, West of the Rocky Mountains. With the advent of the California pioneer

in 1849, began the development of the vast empire of the whole Pacific Coast, which gave to the Nation an added wealth of gold and other precious metals, of timber, and other natural resources, in figures so immense that the human mind cannot appreciate their magnitude.

The early settlers of the eastern states had indeed tremendous obstacles to overcome. Hostile savage tribes had to be met and conquered, a vast wilderness had to be cleared, and the forms of government and of society adopted and order compelled.

All these things, also, the Pioneers of California were confronted with, and while the pioneers of Colonial times did their work and did it well, — and all honor, credit and glory to them for the doing of it, nevertheless we, the descendants and the successors of the Pioneers of '49, may with equal pride point to the energy, the bravery, the courage, the perseverance, the intellect and the wisdom of our own California Pioneers as a fitting counterpart to the best that we may find in song or in story of Colonial times.

The pioneer of California came, saw, and conquered, but he conquered not with the arms of war but by the arts of peace. He came here not to subdue or plunder a great empire, but to found a new one. We Californians, animated by pride of State, are pleased to call this State of ours the most priceless jewel in the crown of the nation. It must be remembered that when our California Pioneer came here, he found that jewel a diamond in the rough, and it was he who, with incomparable artistry, gave polish and brilliancy to the finished jewel that we now are so proud of. It was he who, with reverend hands, placed it in the diadem of the nation where, among all the brilliant jewels, it shines out in splendor and effulgent glory.

Nearly fifty years ago today, the then orator of the day stated that, "With all due deference to the general intelligence of our eastern countrymen, and of our law makers in the halls of Congress, we may be permitted to say that

they fail to comprehend the greatness of the land in which they live." The burden of his complaint was, that the people of the eastern states at that time, who had never been to California, had no conception of the immensity of the empire between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Coast, no conception of its vast and varied resources, no conception of the possibilities it offered of a rich and profitable trade with the countries of the Orient.

A great many of us Californians today think just as the eloquent speaker did of fifty years ago today, and while we give second place to none in our loyalty to the estimable man and his advisers now controlling the policies of this Nation, and while we fervently hope that finally and not long in the future the situation will right itself, nevertheless it is with feelings of deep regret for the present, and of fear and trepidation for the future, that we see the fleet of vessels flying the American flag that has for years been the pride of every San Franciscan, swept from the ocean that connects our shores with those of the Orient. It is indeed with feelings of sorrow and sadness that we will shortly see the last of the vessels of this fleet leave the beautiful bay, upon the shores of which we are now standing, and for the last time wave over the waters of the Golden Gate the flag of the Nation we all worship and adore.

Who, of the old Californians, has forgotten "Steamer Day?"

We are reminded by it of the steamers that, before the completion of the transcontinental railroad line, sailed out of this harbor, carrying from us the treasures of the mine and the products of the soil.

We are reminded that twice a month, on "Steamer Day," we had a financial house cleaning.

We are reminded of the scenes of activity and of excitement, surrounding the incoming and out-going of this fleet of vessels.

"Steamer Day," and all the things that went with it, meant much to San Francisco and to California in those days. The ocean highway was for California, for many

years, practically the only means of transporting her wealth to the world outside. And we Californians still feel that transportation by *water* should today engage the solicitous care and attention of our rulers just as much as transportation by *rail*. We believe that the one can and should be made just as beneficial to this City and this State as the other.

For years the greatest boon that we, of California, have hoped from the completion of the Panama Canal, has been a return to the halcyon days of American shipping, before the coming of the railroad. It certainly has been a bitter disappointment to us that notwithstanding the completion of the Canal, the enactment of recent shipping legislation has resulted in a blasting rather than a fruition of those hopes.

May it be that this situation is only temporary, soon to be relieved, if not through the wisdom of our rulers, then by the kindly intervention of Providence.

It is true that we Native Sons take a boundless pride in our State. Sometimes, as we must admit, in voicing that pride we may be guilty of boasting. But never can we, nor do we, separate our pride in our State from our love of all the states.

When our minds, fired by love of State, conjure up for her virtues that perhaps may not be equally appreciated by those from without, when we behold our beloved California the goal, the end, the consummation of the march that for centuries upon centuries has been ceaselessly in progress, in obedience to the dominant idea that "Westward the course of empire takes its way," we are not forgetful that back of us are our compatriots who have remained behind to complete the work that the Pioneers laid out for them, and we rejoice that as the last forward march of the course of empire met the waters that mark the western limits of man's abiding place, the recurrent wave of prosperity that swept over our own beloved State also deposited its beneficent waters upon the other states of the Nation.

We, the descendants of the Pioneers, native sons of California, love our Nation just as much as we do our State, and if at times we must submit to the will of a majority that we, in California, think has been misguided because of a lack of true knowledge of the claims of the West, we nevertheless do so willingly and patriotically. But we must set ourselves about the task of educating our fellow citizens of the East in what California is, what she has done, and may do, and what she means to the Nation. It was in such a spirit as that that this great Exposition was conceived by us. It was not that we expected any profit in an immediate material sense from the management of the Exposition, but we did and do hope that by attracting to our City and State many thousands of our fellow citizens from the different states of the Union, we can make them feel, first that they are part and parcel of us, and we of them, and to that end we have extended ourselves in fulfilling to them the duties of hospitality. It was next our hope that coming into close personal contact and touch with us, they would with their own eyes see the things that they had merely read about, and with their own ears while within our State and City, hear the things that we were asking from the Nation; and thus, guided by their own personal experience, and moved by a spirit of fairness, grant to us, their western brethren, such consideration as in common justice, and as members of one great family, we are entitled to. We have nothing to conceal from the eyes of the most persistent investigator. Indeed, if anything, we have been perhaps over-zealous in exposing our failings rather than in concealing them. We have no apology to make for California. We have nothing to lose and much to gain by having the people of our country know us better. Their knowledge of us will prove our strength. As our country knows us better, we are confident that, if anything, our country will love us the more.

We have left with us today only a few white-haired old men to hear the eventful story of their contemporaries,

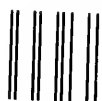
a story, however, that merely touches here and there some of the things that they, and the men who came with them to these shores over sixty-six years ago, accomplished not only for themselves, their city, and their State, but for their Nation, aye, even for the world. These reverend old men, the original Pioneers of California, have long since passed the stone that marked for them the summit of the roadway of life. For many years the sun of their lives has been sinking in the West that they and their fellow pioneers opened up and developed for us all, and their shadows have been ever lengthening in the East, gentle reminders to our friends of the eastern states that the last of the young men who left them some sixty-six years ago and more are passing away from the land that they helped to give to them. But these old men will carry with them, even the last of them, the love, the reverence of a grateful posterity, a love, and reverence, that will grow in intensity as the shadows of the valley of death become for them darker and deeper.

The dream of the Pioneer has been realized for these old men who still survive. A day-dream it was, too, for them and their contemporaries of sixty-six years ago. They did not underestimate the future and so did not underestimate the obligation that was upon them to prepare properly for that future.

The city that we have today, the effort and the achievement that have made her possible, and this World's Exposition that is even better than the brag, are all testimonials to the truth of the tribute paid to San Francisco by the then President of our country, "San Francisco knows how." The pioneers of '49 knew how. They knew how to build, and they builded as they knew.

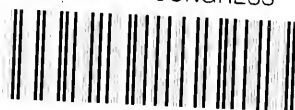


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